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ABSTRACT

The evaluation of professional support personnel in the schools has been a neglected area in educational evaluation. The Center for Research on Educational Accountability and Teacher Evaluation (CREATE) has worked to develop a conceptually sound evaluation model and then to translate the model into practical evaluation procedures that facilitate implementation by practitioners in educational settings. The Professional Support Personnel (PSP) model establishes a systematic evaluation method that builds on the commonalities of the various educational specialty areas while recognizing the distinctiveness of each. Handbooks are being developed to focus on the evaluation of counselors, library media specialists, school nurses, and school psychologists. Steps in the PSP model are: (1) identify system needs; (2) identify duties; (3) select performance indicators; (4) set performance standards; (5) document job performance; (6) evaluate performance; and (7) improve and maintain professional service. (SLD)

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How Do You Evaluate Everyone Who Isn't A Teacher? An Adaptable Evaluation Model for Professional Support Personnel

National Evaluation Institute
Gatlinburg, Tennessee
July 1994

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TM 024114

How Do You Evaluate Everyone Who Isn't A Teacher? An Adaptable Evaluation Model for Professional Support Personnel

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Introduction

One of the most neglected areas of educational evaluation has been that of professional support personnel - the non-teaching, non-administrative professionals who serve as school counselors, media specialists, nurses, curriculum coordinators, etc. The educational accountability and reform movements of the last decade have focused heavily on classroom instructional effectiveness and teacher performance, with little attention paid to professional support personnel. During the same time period, however, schools have become more complex organizations with a greater number of specialists who are in supportive roles - roles which frequently have not been evaluated in a formal, systematic manner.

As local school districts continue to develop district-wide evaluation plans, voluntarily or in response to the above-mentioned state mandates, educators face the challenge of designing and implementing proper evaluation criteria and procedures. The purpose of CREATE Project 2.2 and the Professional Support Personnel (PSP) Evaluation Model is to address this need by developing a conceptually sound evaluation model and translating the model into practical evaluation procedures which facilitate implementation by practitioners in educational settings.

Demonstrated Need

Based on a national survey conducted in 1988 (Stronge, 1988), 42 states indicated they had a legal mandate to evaluate various support personnel professionals. However, only 17 states provided specific training to local districts for evaluating this diverse population. Among those states that provided guidelines and training, substantial differences existed regarding the quantity and quality of assistance provided. Many school counselors, for example, had been evaluated using teacher evaluation forms containing criteria or procedures regarded as inappropriate or inapplicable to counselors. A full replication of the national survey was conducted in 1993 with similar results. As indicated by these studies and numerous other sources, valid, constructive, practical, and systematic evaluation policies and practices on a large-scale basis for professional support personnel are rare. It is to address this type of omission in the practice of educational personnel evaluation that Project 2.2 is dedicated.

Professional support personnel (PSP) - counselors, library media specialists, curriculum specialists, special education resource teachers, school psychologists, school nurses, social workers, gifted and talented resource specialists, and athletic directors - are substantially represented in most elementary and secondary schools, as well as other educational settings throughout the United States. As school districts and other educational organizations develop personnel evaluation plans, either voluntarily or in response to local or state mandates, policy makers and educators face the challenge of designing and implementing evaluation criteria and procedures for all professional personnel, including those whose primary responsibilities do not involve classroom teaching or school administration. If an educational organization is to design a total personnel evaluation system that is oriented toward organizational effectiveness, methodologies appropriate for all personnel must be developed and appropriately implemented.

Intended Outcomes

The Professional Support Personnel evaluation model that will serve as the focus for this project presents an integration of evaluation theory in a system designed explicitly with educational specialists in mind. The PSP evaluation model offers a practical and productive approach to designing workable personnel evaluation systems, not only for support personnel but also for teachers and administrators as researchers and practitioners work toward the development of a common evaluation model for use in educational settings.

While the PSP evaluation model is a generalized one in that it is intended for a wide array of educational specialists, the model is designed specifically for non-teaching and non-administrative professional personnel. By establishing a systematic evaluation system that builds on the commonalties of the various educational specialty areas while recognizing the distinctiveness of each, a sensible and sound evaluation system can be designed. In addition to developing a systematic evaluation methodology that is common to each of the professional support personnel for which this project is targeted, Project 2.2 also will develop lists of job responsibilities and performance indicators that are specific to each of the personnel positions. This combination of common evaluation methodology and customized evaluation substance makes the PSP evaluation model both practical for use by evaluators (i.e., school principals) and appropriate for the specific evaluatee.

Intended outcomes for the Project 2.2 include the further refinement of a model of evaluation for professional support personnel which is field tested and disseminated in practical, practitioner-friendly products. Handbooks are in the process of being developed which focus on the evaluation of selected professional positions:

- counselors 1994
- library media specialists 1994
- school nurses 1995
- school psychologists 1995

They will reflect the literature and practices of the respective professional domains and will include the following:

- comprehensive bibliographies;
- annotated bibliographies on selected materials;
- updated PSP Model; and
- databases of job responsibilities and sample evidence.

Intended Audience

Project 2.2 is designed to assist professional support personnel and those who evaluate them in developing a meaningfully and useful evaluation process. Professional support personnel include three identified subgroups of non-teaching, non-administrative professional personnel:

1. Pupil services personnel - e.g., counselors, school psychologists, social workers, school nurses
2. Instructional support service personnel - e.g., deans, work-study coordinators, librarians, media specialists, special education related services personnel
3. Academic/curriculum development service personnel - e.g., project directors, curriculum coordinators, content specialists, consultants
4. Special education personnel - e.g., self-contained classroom teachers, consulting resource teachers, speech therapists, occupational therapists, physical therapists

In addition to the PSP, the project will provide services to state education agencies and local administrator-evaluators who have the responsibility of evaluating professional support personnel. Ultimately, the project is intended for the most important stakeholders in the educational enterprise - the students.

Professional Support Personnel Evaluation Model

Description

A meaningful and productive personnel evaluation system should address the unique contributions of each employee to the achievement of the school's mission. The Professional Support Personnel (PSP) Evaluation Model offers a practical, research-based model of personnel evaluation developed specifically to address the unique role demands of support personnel as defined by their professional training and the context in which they work. Integral to the model are the following three features.

Individual/Institutional Balance. The PSP Evaluation Model is a systematic process that directly relates organizational and individual goals in the evaluation cycle. The organizational need for accountability is served by beginning the evaluation process with an examination of system level needs (step 1) and relating program expectations to job responsibilities (step 2). With program needs as a foundation for the evaluation process, performance evaluation (step 6) not only reflects on the individual's performance but also on the organization's ability to achieve its goals based on the individual's contribution. Moreover, the professional development of the individual is enhanced by the collaborative delineation of job expectations, standards of performance, and valid methods of documenting performance. Therefore, the model offers a persistent focus on opportunities for personal improvement throughout the evaluation cycle.

Emphasis on Communication. The PSP Model is predicated on the assumption that communication is central to effective evaluation. Since the ultimate goal of any evaluation is to continue successful programs or improve less successful ones, feedback and open discussion are essential to a productive evaluation process. Good communication between the evaluator and the person evaluated:

- Allows for the cooperative development of an evaluation plan;
- Provides a systematic opportunity for individual skill enhancement and improved performance;

- Provides the evaluatee with enhanced self-expectations;
- Increases the likelihood of changes in behavior;
- Identifies ways to reach higher standards and correct significant discrepancies; and
- Establishes a check and balance system for the evaluation process.

Multi-faceted Data Collection. In addition, to the importance placed on communication and the relationship between an individual's performance and the system's needs, the PSP Model emphasizes multifaceted assessment techniques for documentation of job performance. Multiple sources of information increase the validity of an evaluation for any professional, but are essential for the evaluation of support personnel. The "work" of a nurse, media specialist, or counselor is often best judged by means other than direct observation. Issues of confidentiality actually preclude observation in some cases, thus, requiring a creative use of survey data, performance artifacts, case notes, etc., to provide an accurate measure of job performance.

Steps in the PSP Model

The PSP Model reflects an evaluation cycle consisting of seven distinct steps which are briefly described below. Because the PSP Model is improvement-oriented, steps four through seven should be repeated on a continual basis to promote opportunities for individual performance improvement.

Step 1: **Identify System Needs**. Each educational organization has specific needs that are related to the organization's mission and that are met through the collective performance of all personnel, including support personnel. A systematic examination of the needs of the organization's constituents will help clarify its mission and purpose. Determining the needs of the organization is a prerequisite for all remaining steps if the evaluation process is to be relevant to the organization's mission and, ultimately, accountable to the public.

Step 2: Identify Duties. Accurate and appropriate descriptions of job responsibilities or duties can be developed only from clear statements of organizational

goals and philosophies. Once organizational goals are determined, then it is only sensible to relate program expectations to position expectations (i.e., duties of the educator). See Chart 3 for a listing of eight general categories of responsibilities for professional support personnel.

Step 3: Select Performance Indicators. Because job performance must be reflected in behavior in order to be evaluated, this step involves the identification and selection of behaviors or indicators (i.e., performance indicators) that are reflective of key job responsibilities (Step 2). While job responsibilities are intended to capture the essence of the job, it is difficult, if not impossible, to document the fulfillment of job responsibilities without some measurable indication of their accomplishment. Thus, to give meaning to these broader job responsibilities, it becomes necessary to select a sampling of performance indicators that are both measurable and indicative of the job.

Step 4: Set Performance Standards. Setting standards involves determining a level of acceptable performance. Because of program needs, available resources, the purpose of a specific position, and a variety of other factors, standards of performance may vary from organization to organization. The PSP evaluation system offers a method for setting standards rather than attempting to prescribe specific standards of performance which do not reflect contextual variables.

Step 5: Document Job Performance. Documentation is the process of recording sufficient information about the individual's performance to support ongoing evaluation of the staff member and to justify any personnel decisions based on the evaluation. Documentation procedures rely on multifaceted data collection techniques including observation, questioning, and analysis of artifacts of performance.

Step 6: Evaluate Performance. Evaluation is the process of comparing an individual's documented job performance with the previously established performance standards. Depending on the timing of this comparison, this discrepancy analysis can serve either formative or summative purposes. The conference itself is an occasion for

candid communication between evaluator and evaluatee. Identification of discrepancies between standards and performance, and discussions of reasons for those discrepancies is the primary but not the sole focus of the conversation. Emphasis on areas for improvement or on new objectives should be incorporated into the evaluation process.

Step 7: Improve and Maintain Professional Service. With an emphasis in the evaluation process on both improvement (i.e., formative) and accountability (i.e., summative) purposes, this step brings the process full circle. Formative aspects of evaluation, intended to provide recognition for noteworthy performance, along with immediate and intermediate feedback for performance improvement and correction where needed, should be ongoing throughout the evaluation process and are implicit in this model. Nonetheless, it is beneficial to provide an explicit step for improving or maintaining performance as the culmination of the evaluation cycle and as an entree into the following cycle. This step suggests the importance of ongoing professional development with a balance between the interests of individuals and the interests of institutions in a continuous improvement cycle. After all, the most fundamental purpose of the evaluation is to improve both the individual's and institution's performance.

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